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Displaying the Works of God

BY DANIEL GONZÁLEZ

“I hope I’m wrong,” I told Perla Suarez as I watched her clean the wound on Douglas’ shoulder, “but I’m pretty sure he has the super-bug MRSA.” For a couple of weeks before we arrived in Honduras, Perla, a student missionary and nursing major from Union College, had tried to keep clean a wound that had started as a pimple and was now the size of a quarter, swollen with fluid and surrounded by dying tissue. The young patient also had cellulitis, a skin infection caused by bacteria, from his shoulder down to his elbow, including part of his chest and back.

My medical laboratory science clinical year at Andrews University and my clinical experience told me this was a by-the-book staph infection, but I wasn’t sure how to gather the evidence I needed to prove my case. Though I knew what tests to run, I had no way to access any tools for diagnostic testing.

That night, I talked to the pastor about my suspicions. I was worried that if I could not get anyone to listen to me, this young man would die.

“God placed you here for a reason,” the pastor told me. “You are the expert now.”

With renewed confidence, the next morning I called one of my former professors at Andrews. She confirmed my suspicions of staph and, with her certainty and mine, the others at the orphanage decided to take him to a private clinic.

I explained my theory to the doctor there. He agreed with the diagnosis and, without delay, gave us a prescription for strong antibiotics not available at the hospital. He told us to take the patient with us and administer the antibiotics intravenously as soon as possible.

The nursing majors present, two from Union and another from Andrews University, made a list of what we



A young man with a life-threatening infection received a second chance at life, thanks to student missionaries from Andrews University and Union College.

needed to clean the wound, administer antibiotics, and keep the bacteria from spreading. Then we all pooled our cash and prayed it would cover the cost of what we needed from the pharmacy.

We were able to get everything we needed for about \$150, and found a clinical laboratory that took samples and sent them for testing for another \$50. In the U.S., treatment for this infection

would have required hospitalization, and cost the patient thousands of dollars.

A couple of days after we began treatment, the lab called to confirm it was MRSA, a life-threatening infection that has become resistant to most common antibiotics in the U.S. and is an increasing problem in Latin America.

That day, I asked God why he would permit such a thing to happen to an innocent young teenager. Suddenly, Jesus’ words echoed in my head: *But this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him* (John 9:3 NIV). At that moment, I felt so happy God had used us to share his hope for humanity, even in the remotest regions of Honduras.

Daniel González is an instructor of medical laboratory sciences at Andrews University.